

**MINUTES OF THE COMMON COUNCIL
WORK SESSION
October 18, 2011
City Council Chambers – Rouss City Hall**

PRESENT: President Jeff Buettner; Councilor Evan Clark, John Hill, John Tagnesi, John Willingham; Vice-President Art Major; Vice-Mayor Milt McInturff; Mayor Elizabeth Minor, (8)

ABSENT: Les Veach (1)

President Buettner called the meeting to order at 6:00pm.

Items for Discussion:

Community Communications Proposal

Joel Davis, Human Resources Director / FOIA and Public Information Officer, said he would like to share with Council ideas to improve communication with the community. Mr. Davis said he is asking Council to provide feedback as to whether Council believes any or all of these are for consideration with the FY2013 budget process. In his eyes, the philosophy of the Public Information Office is to be as transparent as possible to the public and share as much information as we can about items Council deliberates on, considers and so forth. The goal is to provide accurate information to the public and our media friends, to be more proactive, and to get them involved early as opposed to them reacting to what they hear. Mr. Davis said the methods proposed to expand communication to the public are Cable Channel 20, new publications such as an annual report and quarterly newsletter, televised Council Work Sessions, proactive interaction with the media, and the utilization of DeltAlert. He said with Cable Channel 20, the City Manager would be assuming operational control of this channel on or before October 31. By that, the City will manage all content such as changing the graphics on a regular basis, keeping the information updated on a regular basis, and expanding the information. Mr. Davis said the publications being proposed are an annual report to include a summary of City accomplishments from the previous year and financial information to be released in February or March and quarterly newsletters to provide updates on City projects, upcoming events and pertinent information. Mr. Davis said the benefits of televising Council Work Sessions are that it allows the citizen to see Council and staff work through complex issues and provides detailed information on issues and projects. He said having proactive interaction with media includes regular press briefings and scheduling interviews with staff on upcoming projects.

Councilor Clark arrived at 6:07pm

Mr. Davis stated the DeltAlert system would replace City Watch. This system would have integrated communications, voice and text delivery to multiple communication

devices, and a Geo-Calling feature which would isolate certain areas and is fully hosted and managed software that has message delivery with comprehensive reporting. Mr. Davis said DeltAlert would be a modernized citizen alert that has effective community outreach and simplicity of use.

Mr. Davis presented the following options for consideration: option 1 to include the annual report, quarterly newsletters, broadcast work sessions and DeltAlert for an estimated annual cost of \$46,745; option 2 to include quarterly newsletters, broadcast work sessions and DeltAlert for an estimated annual cost of \$36,944; option 3 to include quarterly newsletters and DeltAlert for an estimated annual cost of \$31,184. He said they wanted to provide these to give you options, but they are willing to provide any combination.

Vice-Mayor McInturff said he had a meeting with the previous City Manager, Jim Deskins and Joel Davis in July and recommended that these be presented to the Communication Committee to see if this is something they are interested in. The Communication Committee voted to send it to Council. Vice-Mayor McInturff said he feels some of the disconnect we've had with our citizens has been caused by a lack in communication and in knowledge. He thinks that some of the things Mr. Davis has put together will help bridge that gap, especially with the televised work sessions. Vice-Mayor McInturff said anything that will open the door so the citizens can get more of an understanding in what we do during those off Council meetings is an idea that is long overdue.

Councilor Willingham asked how the current monthly City newsletter the citizens get will tie in with the quarterly newsletter. Mr. Davis said they are still looking into that and are talking with Amy Simmons to see if they want to continue with it. Councilor Willingham said he asked today about being able to stream the meeting online which will allow the meetings to be viewed and available for future viewings. Mr. Davis said he got the price of streaming online, which would be \$14,000, he said this is an estimate from 2009, but if you pay it monthly it would be \$800.

Councilor Tagnesi asked about the community outreach and wondered if they are going to use landlines or cell phones. Mr. Davis said it would be a combination of both, the citizens would decide if they wanted this on their landline or cell phone with a text message or an email.

President Buettner said one of the things they have talked about forever is how to do a better job of reaching the citizens to let them know what's going on with projects or anything else. He thinks some of these would be very good ways to address that and not rely on the media to be our spokesperson but really let people know what's happening and why. President Buettner said he thinks the d piece of it that gets missed a lot is the why factor. President Buettner said he likes to look at this as a pathway and phisophically would like to look at monetary items that aren't emergencies within the budget cycle. President Buettner also said this is great information and if we are going to do this, it needs to be added to the budget for next year and planned on.

President Buettner said one of the big ticket items in this was the quarterly report and asked to see some kind of a mock example of this. President Buettner said about 3 years ago, they sent out calendars that had a lot of information in them, but received negative feedback because of the cost. However, the next year, we got negative feedback because we didn't provide any information.

Councilor Clark said to follow up with what was said earlier on receiving the alerts by text, phone or email, the same should be done with the quarterly newsletter because it would be a lot cheaper to email them then print it out with glossy paper. Councilor Clark said another possibility is to post them on the website and direct people to it by putting directions in the utility bill. Councilor Clark asked if there were a maximum number of text messages, or phone numbers that we can plug into the system. Mr. Davis said there is no limit to the size of that number.

Loudoun Street Mall Design

Perry Eisenach, Public Services Director, said as all are aware they are on schedule to complete a big project on the Pedestrian Mall replacing all the underground utilities. He said they will start construction on January 2, 2013 and the goal is to get the project done by the end of May. He said over the past year, they've spent a lot of time planning the underground utility replacement and pretty much have a firm grip on what it all entails. He said along with that, we have worked with Karen Helm and the Old Town Development Board Design Committee in looking at some other possible enhancements that could be done. Mr. Eisenach said this project will provide an opportunity, while doing all this construction, to perhaps construct some other improvements on the mall that have been discussed at various times in recent years.

Karen Helm, Old Town Development Board Executive Director, said some of the things that you are going to see presented tonight are ideas that we are revisiting that were mentioned back in 1983 when the City first did the Streetscape Plan for the downtown area. She said in 2007, the board updated that Streetscape Plan because there were things that needed to be replaced and could be done ourselves, like the hanging baskets, colorful banners, benches and new trashcans.

Mr. Eisenach said the conceptual drawings presented tonight are some of these possible improvements that consist of gateway features at each end and at the center of the mall, some water features, and a public restroom. Mr. Eisenach said they scheduled a public open house next Thursday, October 27, 2011, at City Hall from 4pm to 7pm. He said they will be presenting the same drawings just to get some feedback and he wants to make sure Council likes it as well as the public. He plans to come back to Council the first part of next year with the actual costs and reprimanded improvements for Council's decision at that time.

Mr. Eisenach said the first proposed feature is a gateway at the south end of the mall, which involves an arched sign that reads "Old Town Winchester" and the features on the side are proposed water type features. He said that a fire truck and any other truck can get through this sign. The next feature is up on the north end, which is a little bit of a

different design because the architecture is a little bit different on the north side than the south side. He said the architectures brought the concept of the Handley Library to this area and the sides would also be proposed water features. The proposed feature for the center of the mall are columns in each corner with arches and the signs within the columns will be removable to put art up, etc and in the very center there would be a compass. Mr. Eisenach said the next page is the location for a proposed water feature/public restroom.

Ms. Helm said of all the design aspects that we are proposing most of them are pretty intuitive of things that we had thought about or seen in other businesses or communities. She said this particular amenity is something that we put a lot of thought into and decided that this is going to serve the north end of the mall as a city center area for events, farmers market, anything else the public can put there. She said in the middle of the mall we have the old Frederick County Courthouse Building which is where a lot of our events are staged right now, it's also a little bit open, and so it's sort of a landmark for that area of the mall. She said the south end of the mall is very quiet and they have a difficult time attracting businesses to that end and the businesses that do locate there have a bit of a struggle at that end of the mall because of the lack of pedestrian traffic. She said their idea was to create an activity area and something that would be appealing to families, it's a little bit more removed out of the bar scene and the financial, commercial corridor that you see up at the north end and we have space. She said the city actually owns that parking lot so that's property the city can control what happens to. She said when they looked at the space their impression also was to have an area that was large enough to accommodate a public bathroom area, a seating area, a fountain area, and also so we can pull it out of the mall so everyone can see there is activity. She said another idea about this area, in addition to being a little more attractive for a business improvement; it kind of serves what is already occurring down there, which is a family, children's center. She said they have preschool and daycare programs and Shenandoah University Community Arts Program.

Mr. Eisenach shared the last feature, he said the building in the back is the restroom and extending out into the mall is the water feature. He said the restroom would be a stone type of building and would match the Downtown Mall. He said the restroom would be a self-cleaning facility, which is known in Europe, and has heard it's successful. He said the water feature would be able to be converted into an ice skating rink during the winter months.

Councilor Willingham asked about the signs that go across in the middle of the mall and if there is anything else the City can do to better publicize this. Ms. Helm said they recently started putting large banners on the kiosk in the middle of the mall but they are extremely expensive and don't hang very well.

President Buettner said he likes the banners because they do announce to people who may not be familiar with the area. Just to see something there is kind of a visual queue that people love, which could be messy but is still something people begin to like. President Buettner said his only concern is which comes from having to deal with certain individuals, when you have public restrooms you have to be very careful in terms of how they're monitored. He knows this was strategically placed but it's still a concern

of his. He also wonders how it is going to go over with the public with it being so close to children. Ms. Helm said she's had those same kinds of conversations with communities that have these kind of fountains installed. She doesn't have an answer for that right now, but that's on the list still.

Councilor Tagnesi said it's a great plan but he thinks something more perfect for the kids playing in the water fountains in the background would be something like a petting zoo instead of a bathroom. Ms. Helm said when the committee was discussing the restroom, it had a hard time identifying a place for it and that parking lot was the only place that was convenient. She said their thought was if there were families with children in the area, they would be the ones using the restroom. The committee wanted to keep it close to the family activities so the families would not have to drive to the other end of the mall to use the restroom.

Mayor Minor said she loved the idea and thought it was great. Her only concern was that she had a problem with the different entrances for the north and south end. Mayor Minor said she would like to see it the same at both ends.

Councilor Clark said he likes the plans and thinks we are moving in the right direction. His only concern is with the gateway entrances and would it create a choke point at the entrances to the mall during high traffic flow times. He said both are very pleasing aesthetically. Councilor Clark said the other concern he had with the infrastructure project is that it was his understanding that a large number of the mature trees will have to come down. Mr. Eisenach said there would be a significant number of trees removed but in order to replace the underground utilities we simply don't have a choice. Mr. Eisenach said there will be a limited amount of room to put a new water and sewer in.

Councilor Clark asked if there was any way to minimize that and keep the mature trees. Mr. Eisenach said at the open house next week, there will be a PowerPoint that will show which trees can go and which ones have to go and let the public know. Councilor Clark said a lot of the character of the mall, just like a lot of parts of our city, is kind of defined by the mature, tree lined streets. He just wants to try and do everything they can to preserve all the trees they can.

Vice-Mayor McInturff said he likes everything they've done here. Somewhere he read that one of the many things that are kind of synonymous with successful, likable, small towns like Winchester is some type of a water feature and/or skating rink. He thinks this is spot on trying to bring this to the Downtown area. Vice-Mayor McInturff said looking at some of the trees downtown, there comes a time when cutting down those trees and replacing them with the right trees will be fine.

President Buettner said a couple years ago we had Chief Wright talking about the dangers of some of those trees so from a fire perspective smaller is better in that type of space.

Vice-President Major asked what the total cost of the infrastructure project will be. Mr. Eisenach said just the underground project will be in the 5 million dollar range. Vice-

President Major clarified with Mr. Eisenach that that cost just has to deal with the underground project and nothing with the beautification project. Mr. Eisenach confirmed that cost only dealt with the underground project.

Councilor Willingham asked if there would be additional improvements to the lighting up and down the mall. Mr. Eisenach said they will be replacing the entire underground electric system as well as the street light. Not only will there be more lights, the lights will not be as high as they are now.

City Attorney Anthony Williams said one issue to clarify about the cost of this is the underground portion is being done for free with Shenandoah Valley Electric Cooperative.

Councilor Tagnesi asked if security cameras are going to be installed in the family area. Mr. Eisenach said they have not gotten to that issue yet.

First Quarter Financial Report

Mary Blowe, Director of Finance, said this will probably look familiar to a few of you. Ms. Blowe said on the first quarter, they didn't have many things to report on it but there will be more of an analysis to report on it in the second quarter. She said herself and Interim City Manager Craig Gerhart took a look at the financial model and decided to do a first quarter trend analysis. Ms. Blowe said all in all everything looks positive and we are going in a positive direction. She said she could do a midyear budget if Council would like. Ms. Blowe gave a brief analysis of the budget and all the necessary details. She asked if it was okay to give the planning model update quarterly and that she would still provide monthly summaries.

Ms. Blowe asked Councilor Willingham to repeat the question he had asked earlier. Councilor Willingham said he asked what had happened to the \$600,000 for last year. Ms. Blowe said it was reflected on this quarter. Councilor Willingham said the brief discussion for non profits was if you move money in or out of the fund you have to consider it to be revenue or an expense. He said it's not a big deal if you transfer money from one account to another, but if you move nonprofits in and out you have to report it as revenue or an expense. Councilor Willingham said the available cash for the general fund balance is 10 million 9, which is a little bit lower than what he was expecting. He asked if that was based upon timing of receipts versus expenses. Ms. Blowe said 17 million is more a realistic number because there are some money in short term investments. It will go down even more next month and then on December 5th it will come back up. She said they paid the bulk of our debt service and general funds and we are still going along pretty well. Councilor Willingham asked what the general fund reserved operating cash was. Ms. Blowe said this is any funds that we have, any liabilities that we have to pay, basically stuff due to taxpayers, which is high right now.

R-2011-53: Resolution – Authorization to Accept Funding Awarded from the 2011 Assistance to Firefighter Grant and Approval to use General Fund Money for the Funding Match

Scott Cullers, Fire Chief, said in Council's packet there is a resolution we would like for Council to consider for a grant. It is the AFG or Assistance to Firefighter Grant which has been around since 2001. Chief Cullers explained what they would use the grant money for and asked for Council's consideration in providing \$24,670, which will require a supplemental appropriation from the general fund, if they receive the grant.

President Buettner asked instead of having the grant match come out of the general fund, if there was a reason why it wouldn't come out of the E911 fund. Chief Cullers said he has to consider some alternate locations for this money to come out of and he has discussed this with Ms. Blowe.

Vice-President Major said if we don't think we are going to hear about this until July or August of next year, he thinks the match should be incorporated into the Fiscal 2013 budget in some way, shape, or form. He said he would like to suggest to Council that a small lot of money of \$100,000 or \$150,000 be put into a contingency reserve as part of your adoptive budget that only you can spend money out of, but you do this by transferring out of the contingency reserve into a department so it's not a supplemental appropriation that doesn't come out of the fund balance. Vice-President Major also said he still thinks they should look at the E911 fund balance. Chief Cullers said they could come back to Council or to the City Manager to look at more options.

President Buettner moved to forward R-2011-53 to Council. *The motion was seconded by Councilor Willingham then unanimously approved 8/0.*

R-2011-54: Resolution – Approval of Amendments to the Housing Choice Voucher Program Administrative Plan

Carla Taylor, Director of Social Services, presented a resolution to add foster care children as a priority population for targeting voucher preferences. Ms. Taylor said the HUD vouchers would be used in any community and it would flow in the order of priority and if this is passed it would become effective July 1.

Councilor Hill asked if this program would be available to individuals leaving the care of the HHR in West Virginia, coming into this area. Ms. Taylor said only theoretically because the other priorities are you get a point for living or working in the City of Winchester, basically someone who lived in Winchester would get more points than someone who was applying from HHR. She said the other thing to consider is that last year when they opened the waiting list they had 450 applicants for 2 vouchers, so the prioritization on the waiting list is waiting for someone to continue to grow so they can leave the program and gain private housing on their own, then that frees up a voucher, but in this economy that's happening less and less. She said in realistic terms, the likelihood of that is very slim. Councilor John Hill said he noticed there are a number of young people who have moved here from West Virginia, some that will probably fit the criteria you set up. Ms. Taylor said if they were living in Winchester, they would get both preferences.

Vice-President Major moved to forward R-2011-54 to Council. *The motion was seconded by Councilor Tagnesi then unanimously approved 8/0.*

Report of Liaisons

Interim City Manager Craig Gerhart said there are some handouts concerning teacher salaries that were passed out. Councilor Willingham mentioned at the meeting general topics ranged from the wheels tax proposal to the fruit stand discussion. Interim City Manager Craig Gerhart said there was also a presentation from the gentleman from the post office.

Adjourn

President Buettner made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:11 p.m. *The motion was seconded by Councilor Willingham then unanimously approved 8/0.*